

III. REMARKS

1. Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10 are amended. Claims 1-10 are pending in this Application. Applicant appreciates the indication of allowable subject matter in claim 3 but feels that the claims are allowable as currently amended.

2. The claims are amended to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph.

3. Claims 1, 2, 9 and 10 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) over Beckstrom et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,406,591 ("Beckstrom"). Claim 1 recites a separator for separating envelope flaps from envelope bodies, of which an active zone of separation comprises a supple part. Beckstrom does not disclose or suggest an active zone of separation comprises a supple part as recited in claim 1.

Beckstrom discloses a mailing machine (100) for processing an envelope (20). The base (300) of the mailing machine includes a moistener assembly (320) (Col. 3, L. 59 - Col. 4, L. 1). The moistener assembly (320) includes a stripper blade (322), a guide surface (324) and a wick assembly (330). The stripper blade (322) includes a main body (322a) and a knife edge (322b). The main body (322a) is substantially coplanar with the deck (302) so as to provide an integral surface for the envelope body (20a) to rest on. The knife edge (322b) is raised above the plane of the deck (302) and assists in separating the flap (20c) from the body (20a) of the envelope (20) (Col. 4, L. 19-28).

The blade (322) in Beckstrom is disclosed as having a main body (322a) and a knife edge (322b) that are formed as a one piece member (Figs. 4-6 and 9-12). Nowhere does Beckstrom disclose the stripper blade (322) as having an active zone of separation

comprising a supple part as recited in Applicant's claim 1. Therefore, claim 1 is patentable over Beckstrom. Claim 10 is patentable over Beckstrom for reasons similar to those described above with respect to claim 1. Claims 2-9 are patentable at least by reason of their respective dependencies.

4. Claims 1, 2 and 5-10 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) over Holbrook et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,138,816 ("Holbrook"). Claim 1 recites a separator for separating envelope flaps from envelope bodies, of which an active zone of separation comprises a supple part. Holbrook does not disclose or suggest an active zone of separation comprises a supple part as recited in claim 1.

Holbrook discloses an envelope opening station (10) that includes a pivotally-mounted, airfoil shaped blade (26), which has a wedge-like cross section. Blade (26) has a sharp front edge (28), flat top sections (30), which optionally may be separated by cut out sections (32), and an end (34) that curves downstream. Blade (26) also has a trailing edge (36), which includes brackets (38). Brackets (38) hold hinge (40), upon which is mounted flap member (42), which extends substantially horizontally downstream from trailing edge (36) of blade (26) (Col. 2, L. 19-29). Blade (26) is mounted on the mail-handling machine by means of a pivot (60). Torsion spring (62) biases blade (26) in a counterclockwise direction towards a home position (Col. 2, L. 45-48).

The blade (26) in Holbrook is disclosed as having an airfoil shape with a wedge-like cross section and is also shown as a one piece member (Figs. 1-4c). There is absolutely no disclosure in Holbrook of the blade (26) having an active zone of separation comprising a supple part as recited in Applicant's claim 1. Therefore, claim 1 is patentable over Holbrook. Claim 10 is

patentable over Beckstrom for reasons similar to those described above with respect to claim 1. Claims 2-9 are patentable at least by reason of their respective dependencies.

5. Claim 4 is patentable under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Beckstrom or in the alternative, claim 4 is patentable over Beckstrom in view of Holbrook. Claim 4 recites that the supple part comprises a moulded elastomer of silicone type. Neither Beckstrom by itself nor the combination of Beckstrom and Holbrook disclose or suggest the features of claim 4.

As noted above, neither Beckstrom nor Holbrook disclose or suggest a blade having an active zone of separation comprising a supple part as recited in Applicant's claim 1. Thus, because neither Beckstrom nor Holbrook discloses or suggests a blade having an active zone of separation comprising a supple part their combination cannot as well. Claim 4 is patentable over Beckstrom and Holbrook, individually or in combination, at least by reason of its dependency on claim 1.

Moreover, because Beckstrom and Holbrook, individually or in combination, do not disclose or suggest a supple part, they cannot disclose or suggest that the supple part comprises a moulded elastomer of silicone type as recited in Applicant's claim 4. Thus, claim 4 is patentable over Beckstrom by itself or in combination with Holbrook for this additional reason that the references do not disclose all the features of claim 4 as is required for an obviousness rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) (See M.P.E.P. § 2142).


For all of the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that all of the claims now present in the application are clearly novel and patentable over the prior art of record, and are in



proper form for allowance. Accordingly, favorable reconsideration and allowance is respectfully requested. Should any unresolved issues remain, the Examiner is invited to call Applicants' attorney at the telephone number indicated below.

A check in the amount of \$ 1020.00 is included herewith for a three-month extension of time. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge payment for any fees associated with this communication or credit any over payment to Deposit Account No. 16-1350.

Respectfully submitted,



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4 April 2006
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